

Stories 1859

(1)

THE TAIL OF A TADPOLE.

A BLADE of grass is a world of mystery, "would men observingly distil it out." When my erudite friend, Gerunds, glancing round my workroom, arrested his contemptuous eye on a vase abounding in tadpoles, and asked me with a sniffing superiority:

"Do you really mean to say you find any interest in those little beasts?"

I energetically answered:

"As much as you find in Elzevira."

"H'm!" grunted Gerunds.

"Very absurd, isn't it? But we have all our hobbies. I can pass a bookstall on which I perceive that the ignorance of the bookseller permits him to exhibit an edition of Persius among the rubbish at 'one shilling each.' The sight gives me no thrill—it does not even slacken my rapid pace. But I can't so easily pass a pond in which I see a shoal of tadpoles swimming about, as ignorant of their own value, as the bookseller is of

Persius. I may walk on, but the sight has sent a slight electric shock through me. Why, sir, there is more to me in the *tail* of one of those tadpoles than in all the poems of that obscure and dreary Persius. But I won't thrash your Jew unless you thrash mine."

"Why, what on earth can you do with the tail?"

"Do with it? Study it, experiment on it, put it under the microscope, and day by day watch the growth of its various parts. At first it is little but a mass of cells. Then I observe some of these cells assuming a well-known shape, and forming rudimentary blood-vessels. I also observe some other cells changing into blood-cells. Then the trace of muscles becomes visible. These grow and grow, and the pigment-cells, which give their colour to the tail, assume fantastic shapes."

"Very interesting, I dare say."

"You don't seem to think so, by your tone. But look in this vase: here you see several tadpoles with the most apologetic of tails—mere stumps, in fact. I cut them off nine days ago."

"Will they grow again?"

"Perfectly; because, although the frog dispenses with a tail, and gradually loses it by a process of resorption as he reaches the frog form, the tadpole needs his tail to swim with; and Nature kindly supplies any accident that may deprive him of it."

"Yes, yes," added Gerunds, glad to feel himself once more in the region of things familiarly known: "just like the lobster, or the crab, you know. They tear off their legs and arms in the most reckless manner, yet always grow them again."

"And would you like to know what has become of these tails?"

"Arn't they dead?"

"Not at all. 'Alive and kicking.'"

"Alive after nine days? Oh! oh!"

"Here they are in this glass. It is exactly nine days since they were cut off, and I have been watching them daily under the microscope. I assure you that I have seen them *grow*, not *larger*, indeed, but *develope* more and more, muscle-fibres appearing where no trace of fibre existed, and a cicatrice forming at the cut end."

"Come, now, you are trying my gullibility!"

"I am perfectly serious. The discovery is none of mine. It was made this time last year by M. Vulpian in Paris, and I have only waited for the tadpole season to repeat the observations. He says that the tails constantly lived many days—as many as eighteen on one occasion; but I have never kept mine alive more than eleven. He says, moreover, that they not only grow, as I have said, but manifest sensibility, for they twist about with a rapid swimming movement when irritated. I have not seen this; but M. Vulpian is too experienced a physiologist to have been mistaken; and with regard to the growth of the tails, his observations are all the more trustworthy because he daily made drawings of the aspect presented by the tails, and could thus compare the progress made."

"Well, but I say, how the deuce *could* they live when separated from the body? our arms or legs don't live; the lobster's legs don't live."

"Quite true; but in these cases we have limbs of a complex organisation, which require a complex

apparatus for their maintenance; they must have blood, the blood must circulate, the blood must be oxygenated—"

"Stop, stop; I don't want to understand why our arms can't live apart from our bodies. They *don't*. The fact is enough for me. I want to know why the tail of a tadpole can live apart from the body."

"It *can*. Is not the fact enough for you in that case also? Well, I was going to tell you the reason. The tail will only live apart from the body so long as it retains its early immature form; that is to say, so long as it has not become highly organised. If you cut it off from a tadpole which is old enough to have lost its external gills a week or more, the tail will not live more than three or four days. And every tail will die as soon as it reaches the point in its development which requires the circulation of the blood as a necessary condition."

"But where does it get food?"

"That is more than I can say. I don't know that it wants food. The power of abstinence possessed by reptiles is amazing. I was reading the other day an account of a reptile which had been kept in the Boston Museum eight-and-twenty months without any food, except such as it might have found in the small quantity of dirty water in which it was kept."

"Really I begin to think there is more in these little beasts than I suspected. But you see it requires a deal of study to get at these things."

"Not more than to get at any of the other open secrets of Nature. But since you are interested, look at these tails as the tadpoles come bobbing against the side of the glass. Do you see how they are covered with little white spots?"

"No."

"Look closer. All over the tail there are tiny cotton-like spots. Take a lens if your unaccustomed eye isn't sharp enough. There, now you see them."

"Yes; I see a sort of *stuff* scattered about."

"That stuff is an immense colony of parasites. Let us place the tadpole under the microscope, and you will see each spot turn out to be a multitude of elegant and active animals, having bodies not unlike a crystal goblet supported on an extremely long and flexible stem, and having round their rim or mouth a range of long delicate hairs, the incessant motion of which gives a wheel-like aspect, and makes an eddy in the water which brings food to the animal."

"Upon my word this is really interesting! How active they are! How they shrink up, and then, unwinding their twisted stems, expand again! What's the name of this thing?"

"*Vorticella*. It may be found growing on water-fleas, plants, decayed wood, or these tadpoles. People who study the animalcules are very fond of this *Vorticella*."

"Well, I never could have believed such a patch of stuff could turn out a sight like this: I could watch it for an hour. But what are those small yellowish things sticking on the side of these parasites?"

"Those, my dear Gerunds, are also parasites."

"What, parasites living on parasites?"

"Why not? Nature is economical. Don't you live on beef and mutton and fish? don't these beefs,

muttons, and fish live on vegetables and animals? don't these vegetables and animals live on other organic matters? Eat and be eaten is one law: live and let live is another."

Gerunde remained thoughtful; then he screwed up one side of his face into frightful contortions, as with the eye of the other he resumed his observations of the Vorticella. I was called away by a visitor to whom I didn't care to show my tadpoles, because to have shown them would have been to forfeit his esteem for ever. He doesn't think very

highly of me as it is, but has a misty idea that I occupy myself with science; and as science is respectable and respected—our Prince Consort and endless bishops patronising the British Association for the Advancement of Science—the misty idea that after all I *may* not be an idiot, keeps his contempt in abeyance. But were he once to enter my work-room, and see its bottles, its instruments, its preparations, and, above all, the tadpoles, I should never taste his champagne and claret again.

G. H. LEWES.

THE ORIGINAL BUN HOUSE.



I HAVE seen pretty faces under various aspects: some peeping innocently from a wild luxuriance of honeysuckle and roses—others glancing with bright intelligence from opera boxes, made glorious by amber satin, and the radiance of chandeliers; and there is something harmonious in both styles of embellishment. When, however, my youthful fancy was just beginning to put forth its tender buds beneath the cold shade of College House, I had rather peculiar views of decorative art, my notion being, that the sphere for sylphs to shine in was one liberally adorned with puffs,—raspberry galls, cranberry tarts, and all that tends to sweeten existence embittered by Bonnycastle and Valpy. The serene felicity of my first love is thus strangely associated with the favourable impression which I received from my first jelly. I almost tremble now to think what sacrifices in cash and constitution I made at that refectory

which Amelia's glances filled with mimic sunshine. Warmed by those beams, my consumption of ices was at once rapid and futile. My bosom glowed, despite of all my polar luxuries; and if I suffered from heart-burn (as I often did after a banquet at Crump's), it was not entirely owing to dyspepsia, but derived its poignancy from a singular but powerful combination of Beauty and Buns.

Amelia was Crump's niece. Crump—sole proprietor of the Original Bun House at the corner of the Cathedral Close—was a little weazen, one-eyed, floury-faced man, who always wore a night-cap and a sack-apron. We of College House never saw much of him, for his proper place was below, near the oven, from which, like a fish, he came to the surface at intervals, with a block of gingerbread or a tray of pies. Mrs. Crump—Amelia's aunt—was the most stupendous and remarkable woman I ever saw out of a caravan. She commonly

sat in an arm-chair behind the counter, with a huge toasting-fork erect, like Britannia, and her rule was absolute. She had studied human nature long, and, it would seem, with profitable results, for she gave no credit to man or boy.

You could trace the mandate, "Pay on delivery," sharply etched in her acid countenance; and her voice, decidedly metallic in its upper notes, had none of that softness which marks the advocates of a paper currency. Between her and her niece there were differences of kind, as well as of degree. Amelia's little white palm instinctively shrank from copper coins, hot from our portable treasuries. Her mild blue eyes were full of trust; her rosy lips and bewitching auburn ringlets, all spoke of generosity and confidence; yet such was the respectful devotion with which her loveliness inspired College House, that no boy, however great his natural audacity, ever presumed even in a whisper to ask her to accept his promissory note for a pound of ratafas.

Crump had a workhouse apprentice—an awkward, lazy, ill-constructed lad, who in early life had been fished out of a pond, and had never quite recovered his then suspended animation. Being kept at work all night in a cavern swarming with black-beetles and such queer company, he had lost his hold upon the sympathy of his fellow-men or boys; while his vacant gaze, electrified hair, and ghoul-like nails, had deprived him of any claim to compensation which the gentler sex might otherwise have allowed. Yet, despite of his isolated condition, College House looked on Crump's apprentice with envy. Was he not in hourly communication with Amelia? Might he not abuse the privilege of his position, and pluck from that dimpled chin what College House, by the most liberal expenditure of its petty cash, could never hope to enjoy—a surreptitious kiss? The thought used to haunt us in our midnight visions. One boy, named Barwell, whose father was governor of the county jail, went so far as to assert that he had never at his father's official residence seen any countenance so decidedly felonious as that of Crump's apprentice. No wonder, then, that College House had fears—strong fears—for the security of Crump's till.

To her credit be it spoken, Amelia treated her eager worshippers with strict impartiality. Recognising no superiority of age, learning, or opulence, she bestowed on every ardent lover of her uncle's buns an encouraging smile. On one occasion, however, it was reported that she wrapt up Larpent's change in white-brown paper. Larpent was a West Indian, tall and slender, with remarkably pretty teeth, and a somewhat *distingué* air. He always dressed well, and the distinction shown him was, I honestly believe, entirely owing to his expensive lemon-kid gloves. Slight as was this token of favouritism, it created a feeling of uneasiness and insecurity at College House; and Boag and Pepper, who, in avowed imitation of Beaumont and Fletcher, had established a poetical partnership, of which Amelia's charms might be regarded as the "working capital," at once tore up their sonnets, and dissolved the firm. Blobbins, a boy of plethoric habit, small eyes and little ideality, and who was continually cooling the passions of

youth by sucking oranges, was heard to declare, that he always thought Amelia Pluckrose a coquette; and on being sharply interrogated as to what he meant by that offensive epithet, made answer, that a coquette was one who looked very sweet at you so long as you spent all your money upon buns,—a definition which, however correct, was not in good taste, and covered Blobbins with the obloquy due to vulgar detractors.

On Valentine's Day every pupil at College House, who had attained years of discretion, sent his *gaze-d'amour* to "Miss A. Pluckrose, Original Bun House," and marked outside "Private," to deter Old Crump from breaking the seal. Some of these compositions—my own for example—had never appeared in print. Others were cribbed from Arliss's Magazine, and another anonymous miscellany. With that happy credulity which is youth's most precious inheritance, every boy at College House secretly believed that Amelia's eye was more frequently directed to him for the rest of the "half," than to any one else. It is true that Larpent, by virtue of his liberal outlay for cherry-brandy and preserved ginger at the Original Bun House, could always command an audience of the reigning beauty; but we could all see that Amelia's attention was mere politeness—nothing more.

Larpent, with his lemon-coloured gloves, might have made a sensible impression on some weak-minded girls. But College House had great confidence in his complexion, which was a decided chocolate. We felt assured that Amelia with her refined feelings would never be so silly as Desdemona was, or would cast herself away upon a Moor. Indeed I was inclined to pity Larpent for wasting so much precious eloquence and pocket-money at the Original Bun House, when his extraordinary behaviour towards the College in general, and myself in particular, proclaimed that he neither deserved compassion nor stood in need of it.

I was sitting at my desk on Valentine's Eve composing an acrostic, when some one pulled my ear in a jocular way, and, turning round very angrily, I found it was Larpent who had thus rudely obstructed a poet's progress.

"What will you take for it when it is finished?" he said, bending down to read what I had written.

"Nothing that you can give me," was my answer, in a tone of defiance.

"Amelia P.," he continued, glancing at the initials of each line, "this is for Miss Pluckrose."

"And suppose it is," said I, "you have no right to interfere."

"No right, eh?" he replied, showing his teeth.

"Certainly not. What right have you?"

He grasped my arm with his vice-like fingers till he almost made me shriek, as looking at me like a savage, he exclaimed:—

"The best right which any man can have. The right of conquest—booby!"

There was a pause, very long and very awkward. I could not speak from astonishment. He would not, because my perplexity gratified him.

At last he broke silence.

"I will not allow you or any other fellow, to send a parcel of trumpery love-verses to my Amelia."

"O, then all the trumpery love-verses she may receive must emanate from you!"

I hit him there, and he felt it.
"That's my ultimatum," he rejoined, and he began cutting his pencil furiously.

"Larpernt," said I, after two or three painful endeavours to articulate, "you are carrying the joke a little too far—you are, upon my honour."

"You think so, do you?" he returned, throwing away his pencil. "Well, to convince you that I am perfectly serious, you see this," and he drew from his breast-pocket a small blue-barrelled pistol inlaid with silver.

"If you don't give up your ridiculous pretensions quietly, my friend," was his remark, "you must take your chance of a bullet-hole, that's all. I don't want anything unreasonable, but if you insist on crossing my path in this little affair, down you go—pop!"

"Not if we fire at one another with—cross-bows," said I, maliciously, for only two days before we had a shooting-match at a blacking-bottle, and Larpernt was beaten hollow. "However, I don't want to take an unfair advantage—choose your own weapon—I'm ready and willing."

The West Indian put his pistol back in his pocket, and took my hand.

"Bonser," he said, with affected kindness, "I have a respect for you and consideration for your mother, but really you mustn't stand in my light."

"Stand in your light!" I exclaimed, fiercely. "You are standing in mine. Who spoke to Amelia first? I've known her since I was a child—almost."

Larpernt burst out laughing.

"Why, Bonser, what are you now?" Then, without waiting for my reply, he said:

"Give me this acrostic, promise not to write any more, and I'll present you with a dozen splendid cigars."

"Hang your cigars!" I cried. "Disgusting Cabanas!—they would make me sick."

"Very well, then you mean to fight?"

"I do."

"If you should prefer horse-pistols," said Larpernt, pulling on his lemon-coloured gloves, "I have got a brace in my trunk up-stairs ready loaded."

A sudden rush of pupils into the school-room, singing in chorus "Rule Britannia," prevented my sanguinary rival from proceeding further with his warlike demonstrations. Intelligence had just arrived of the battle of Navarino; and Wapshaw, who loved his country, and used to expatriate in our rural walks upon England's naval supremacy, had, in a fit of enthusiasm, given permission to the boys to sing national airs, for half an hour before supper. I am sure he forgot that vocal exercises invigorate the appetite, or he would never have granted this musical licence.

All night long I lay awake with my eyes fixed on the black leathern trunk with brass nails beneath Larpernt's bed. Notwithstanding my lofty tone when confronting my Creole enemy, I had not made up my mind to fight him, but I resolved to maintain a bold front. Accordingly, when Larpernt came up to me next day in the cricket-ground, and coolly asked me if I was

ready to die for Amelia, I answered sullenly, "I am," and followed him at his command with long and rapid strides. We had nearly reached the coppice at the extremity of the ground, where Larpernt proposed the duel should take place, when a tennis ball came ricocheting behind us, and struck me in my spine. On turning round I perceived a knot of boys gathered round McPhun, the old Scotch gardener of College House, and who hailed us to come back with gesticulations of such earnestness as indicated that something alarming had happened.

I was very glad to obey this peremptory summons, and on my way met Blobbins, with tears streaming from his little eyes.

"Have you heard about poor old Crump?" he said, wiping his cheeks with a tattered pocket-handkerchief.

"No," said I. "Has he been knocked down again by a painter's ladder?"

"Worse," replied Blobbins, sucking an orange to calm his emotion: "he has felt beneath a load of bricks."

"What, crushed!" I exclaimed.

"Regularly," said Blobbins, weeping afresh, and adding, with inconceivable tenderness, "We shall never, Bonser, taste such buns again."

I turned away from this heartless voluptuary with feelings of mingled pity and disdain, and joined the noisy crowd which encircled McPhun, the old Scotch gardener, and eagerly questioned him about poor Crump's catastrophe. From his narrative it seemed that Crump, having scraped together a little money in the Original Bun House, had unwisely invested it in land for building purposes, and, like many other sanguine speculators, had overbuilt himself. This Blobbins figuratively described as being crushed beneath a load of bricks. To accelerate his downfall he had become surety for a particular friend of the family, whose health was so infirm that he could not leave Boulogne when his promissory note became due. The consequence was, that execution had been issued against Crump, who was seized by the sheriff, while another hostile force, with that officer's authority, marched into the Original Bun House, and garrisoned it by command of Crump's principal creditor, a hot-headed brick-maker.

This was sad news indeed.

"And what's become of poor little Mely, Mac?" demanded College House, with its forty-five voices harmoniously rolled into one.

"I hear," replied McPhun, "that she has taken a situation as barmaid at the 'Marquis o' Granby.'"

College House fell back as if its forty-five pillars had been shaken by an earthquake. Amelia, so graceful, innocent, and fair, to let herself down behind the bar of an ordinary commercial inn! Such degradation was enough to cause a sympathetic sinking in every manly breast.

Blobbins whispered to me in my extremity what he deemed words of consolation:

"Couldn't we go to the 'Marquis' together, Bonser, and have a pint of early purl?"

I looked at him distrustfully, and felt confident by his retreating manner that he was profoundly ignorant of the nature of that matutinal beverage. He confessed afterwards that he fancied

it was morning dew, flavoured with sugar and lemon.

My duel with Larpent was postponed *sine die* by tacit consent. The next day, being Wednesday, after dinner Blobbins took me aside, and murmured mysteriously in my ear, "Early purl."

I understood him, and, as soon as we were out of school, we started off towards the "Marquis of Granby," a large posting-inn, facing the Haymarket. As we passed the Original Bun House we observed with sorrow that Crump's homely name had been painted out, and the Italian patronymic of Tolibozzi had usurped its place, while for indigenous "Pastry-cook" was substituted exotic "Confectioner." Tolibozzi was a tall and superior-looking man, with very black eyebrows, a flat linen cap, and a white apron. It appeared that Tolibozzi had been cook in a nobleman's family, and had condescendingly married the lady's-maid. Mrs. Tolibozzi, however, was a very genteel young person, and wore as many rings as her late mistress, with a gold watch and chain. We bought a couple of buns, just out of curiosity; but, O! Tolibozzi's buns were no more to be compared with Crump's than chalk and alum with sugar and eggs: they were, indeed, a *bitter* mockery.

Neither Blobbins nor I had ever entered a tavern; and before we reached the "Marquis" a feeling of nervousness came over us. We tossed for posteriority, and Blobbins lost. Girding up his loins, he dashed across the road, and I followed; but before he went in, he looked through the plate-glass window, and turning round, informed me with dismay that she wasn't there!

It was perfectly true. She was not there; and on inquiring of Tolibozzi, we ascertained that Miss Pluckrose had never accepted any situation there, but contemplated devoting herself exclusively to dress-making and millinery. In answer to our modest application, where she was residing, Tolibozzi believed she was staying with her aunt, either in James Street or John Street, but the number he had forgotten, and Mrs. Tolibozzi had never heard.

Baffled in every effort to discover our Amelia, Blobbins, by way of balm, suggested that we should have a row. Adopting his advice, we made our way down to the ferry-house, and hiring a crank skiff, Blobbins took the rudder, and I the sculls. We were proceeding up the river very gloomily, when all at once Blobbins turned pale, and exclaimed, "Here she comes!"

"Who?" said I.

"Amelia!"

And scarcely had he spoken, when a wherry passed us on our boardward quarter, in which, with a blue silk bonnet and a parasol, sat Amelia, guiding the tiller-ropes, while a smart, yellow-haired young fellow, whose navy cap she held in her lap, was pulling vigorously with his jacket off. They had not passed us more than twenty yards, when one four-oared cutter which was racing against another, suddenly ran foul of Amelia's boat—I very much fear, through that young person's bad steering—and upset it. The naval officer and his charge were both immersed in the water, and the first glance we caught of them among the boats that were crowding round, showed

us Amelia, supported by the strong arm of her gallant protector, who was coolly swimming with her to the bank, where, strange to say, Larpent arrived just too late to render any assistance. The naval officer, having kissed his precious burthen to restore her to consciousness (which it did), they hurried, dripping wet as they were, into a Swiss cottage, whose hospitable doors were opened for their reception, and whose windows were hidden by willow trees.

For some time after this event Larpent never mentioned Amelia's name to any human being. It was just upon the eve of Midsummer, so we lost sight of him; but on my return to College House Larpent, who had never left it, was as close and mysterious as before. He had apparently made up his mind that Amelia was lost to him, and so had we all; nor were we greatly surprised, on the first Sunday after our return, to hear the banns of marriage published at church between Walter Henry Seaward, bachelor, and Amelia Pluckrose, spinster, both of this parish. We did feel, however, some astonishment when, just after that solemn publication, the officiating clergyman left the reading-desk and advanced to the communion-table, at the same time that five persons emerged from the vestry, two being in bridal attire. These were Walter Henry Seaward, bachelor, and Amelia Pluckrose, spinster; the others were old Crump and his wife, and his sister, a thin woman, with a coal-scuttle bonnet and a baggy umbrella.

Poor Larpent! he looked on at the ceremony with an Othello-like glare. Twice he stood up—we were in the gallery—and remained standing for some minutes, notwithstanding Wapshaw desired him to sit down. It seemed cruel for Amelia to be invested with the grand order of matrimony in the presence of so many of her slaves, but I believe she was not morally responsible, having only complied with the earnest entreaty of certain impulsive young ladies in the Cathedral Close, who had formed themselves into a committee of admiration, and who had arranged this public performance of connubial rites as a fitting recognition by Amelia of the gallantry of her preserver.

On leaving College House, which he did at the next "half," Larpent went out to South America, where he became an indigo-planter; and I heard that eventually he married a very plump and opulent widow, whose complexion was several shades more sombre than his own.

Old Crump was comfortably provided for by being appointed verger to the cathedral, where he toddled about for many years with a black gown and a steel piker.

The Original Bun House exists no more. Railway trains stop at the elegant refreshment-rooms which occupy the ground whereon it stood. These elegant rooms I went into last autumn. Another Amelia was there—how like, and yet how different! As charming, perhaps, in some eyes, but not to my experienced vision. My spectacles might have been dim. She seemed to want repose. These modern cafés have their attractions; but, as any school-boy will tell you, after all there is nothing half so sweet in life as the Original Bun House.

A. A.

AN ELECTION STORY.

"WHERE doth the black fiend, Ambition, reside?" inquires somebody in one of Shakespeare's plays—not that Shakespeare wrote the line, it is the elegant work of one of his improvers. Had the demand been made, the other day, to any person who was really in the confidence and secret soul of Maurice Halgover, Esq., gentleman, aged thirty-six, no occupation, living on his rather handsome means, married, the reply would have been, "At No. 73, Mandeville Crescent North, Hyde Park Gardens." And this would have been a much more practical answer than that given in the play, namely, "With the mischievous devil of Pride," as if every body knew *his* address.

Listen to a brief story of an election. It is not

one of those fifty-six stories just now promised to committees, showing the way in which, when my gracious Sovereign is pleased to ask the Opinion of the People, divers of the said people proceed to condense the opinion into Members of Parliament. Hear a tale of woman's love and man's treachery.

They were happy enough, the Halgovers; and why should they not have been happy? Nice house, enough money, good health, not so stupid as to bore other people, not so clever to be bored by other people, high principles, chimneys that didn't smoke, street-keeper remorseless to street-organists—what more could a couple of reasonable people want? In truth, they enjoyed life very much.

Arabella, possessing both good looks and certain moneys, had had divers offers, and made her free choice in wedding Maurice Halgover—a fine, large, handsome fellow, who looked Somebody. That he did look so was chiefly due to the magnificent effect of his head, which was big, and covered with masses of superb, clustering, dark hair, which he did not pat and plaster down and keep short and close, after the fashion of pick-pockets and swells, but lifted it up and out, like Jupiter, giving unto himself a kind of glorious mane. Also he had a very fine, soft long beard, of a highly strokable character, and very good moustaches, which matched his beard and hair, and had not fallen into the cire, and yellow leaf.

Halgover was not careless about all these advantages, and did not let them run wild, as do certain gifted and dirty artists whom I have had the happiness to know. He cultivated the exterior of his head, and had great ivory-backed brushes, and small ivory-backed brushes, and all kinds of combs and silver tongs, and delicate hair-oils, and the rest of the toilette-apparatus which the late Sir Charles Napier of India did not conceive an absolute necessity of life, though any valet could have told him better. It was this hair—or rather the head and its noble appearance—that fascinated Arabella Kinglington, and eventually turned her into Arabella Halgover. She got into her own head a notion that Maurice was a great creature. He was really only a big creature, but lady language is like the new Government rifles, any lock fits to any stock, and any stock fits to any barrel, and lady adjectives are especially famous for easily sticking.

Arabella married him, and still preserved her romance of his greatness. They loved, and lived together, or whatever the song says, for ever so many years, four or five, and Arabella continued to reverence her great creature. She would actually sit and look admiringly at him, in evenings, an unheard-of matrimonial feat, and what she spent in having him painted, and photographed, and sketched, and busted, nobody knows. Maurice was stuck up in every corner of the house, besides being hung over the fire-places, and shut up in cases on the tables, and perched on a pedestal in the conservatory, and profiled in medallion in the library. Every mode in which the head which looked like Somebody could be perpetuated, was tried by the faithful Arabella. She certainly rather bored her friends with her superfluous laudation of Maurice's attractions, but it was a very pleasant

sight to see her admiration and fondness, and nobody but he who grew spiteful at the happiness of Eden, or one of his children, would have wished to disturb so harmless and, I may say, virtuous a state of things.

Nevertheless, such a demon there was.

Mind, this is not a tale of seduction, or anything of that sort; and, so, if this explanation makes the story too flat for the readers of the novels of the day, they had best go on to the next article.

"I cannot stand it," said Osprey Hawke, on the steps of the Reform Club, Pall Mall (he is not a member, you need not get the list "to see whom that's a shy at," Major), "and something must be done, Fred. I am—word escaped our reporter—if, after dinner, she didn't ask me to step into the little drawing-room with her, and then, pointing out her husband's great head as he leaned over the back of a chair, chattering rubbish, she didn't say, 'Isn't it statuesque?'"

"You had an exceedingly good dinner, and you are an ungrateful party," said Fred (who is a member), going into the club with a disgust that did him honour.

"I don't care," said Hawke, talking to himself.

They say that when you talk to yourself, evil spirits listen and answer. I don't know anything about this, but Hawke had hardly spoken and lit a cigar, preparatory to walking off, when a gentleman came out of the club, and they got into conversation. The gentleman gave him a bit of news.

"Well, he might have told me," said Hawke, "considering that I was dining there to-day."

And having received this deadly injury, he became more resolved upon his plan, which involved revenge.

The general election was close at hand.

Four days later, Mr. Maurice Halgover and Mr. Osprey Hawke were together in a private room at the Blue hotel at Stickleborough.

I alluded in my first line to the black fiend Ambition. Spare me the necessity of any long story. Halgover's ambition, greatly stirred and fanned by his wife's admiration, had set him on entering the House of Commons. The great creature was sure to make a glorious success. Mrs. Arabella Halgover had a private conviction that when the senate beheld that magnificent head, there would be a general shout to the great creature to take the reins of Government. She did not exactly say this, but looked forward to see a leading article in the *Times*, beginning, "Mr. Halgover's splendid speech last night has made the man, and saved the state." It may come yet—who knows? The Emperor of the French is thought to have turned out a first-class General.

The gentleman at the club had arranged the business (I repeat that there is no petition, so you need not look so very wise, Major), and Mr. Halgover had placarded Stickleborough, and was now down to see his intended constituents.

"I am so glad to find you here, old fellow," said Halgover, greeting Hawke. "Very kind of you to come. How long have you been down?"

"Come in, come in," said Osprey Hawke, rather hastily, drawing his friend into the room and closing the door, which he locked.

"What's wrong?" said Halgover, startled.

"All's wrong," said Hawke. "I have seen some of the leading people here—your men—and I've got a telegraph from Lasher."

"Why," said Halgover, in trepidation, "he assured me it was all right. I paid—"

"Hush! confound you!—and perhaps a Yellow cat at the keyhole. You'll lose the election."

"I'd sooner pay—"

"Will you be quiet. Listen. There's only one thing to do to save it, and that of course you won't do."

"Go in for the ballot and universal suffrage? Well, you know, I *don't* like it; I don't think it right; but I shouldn't like to lose, and Arabella would be—"

"That's it, of course. It would break Mrs. Halgover's heart to see you return crestfallen and humiliated before the world. But then I tell you fairly, the sacrifice is something."

"Tell me at once."

"Well, I have this from all your chief friends. The man who stood here last time balked the electors; did 'em out of their dues, as they think them. His name is poison."

"But mine's Halgover."

"Unfortunately, you are very like him in ap-



pearance—luxurious hair, splendid beard and moustache. A rumour has got about that you are the same man, but have come into money and changed your name. The Yellows have some photographs of him, with Halgover *alias* Swindleton printed under them. If you are seen you are lost. A deputation is coming to urge upon you—and Lasher telegraphs that you are to do it at any price—but you won't."

"Won't—won't—"

"SHAVE. Get a bald head, take away beard and moustaches, and suddenly appear in the town, defying Yellow malice. A pair of high shirt collars, instead of the all-rounder, for they are men of business here, and high collars are somehow connected with respectability, and it's

done. If not, you are lost, the impression once made."

"But I shall be such a Guy," stammered the wretched Halgover.

"But you will be member for Stickleborough," returned the artful Hawke.

Imagine the mental conflict: imagine the yielding: imagine the Blue Barber, and his fatal work.

Mr. Halgover was triumphantly returned. Mr. Lasher had minded his business, and taken care that other people minded theirs. Halgover telegraphed himself to Arabella as at the top of the poll of Stickleborough, but said nothing about the top of his own poll.

"Go in and break it to her," he said to Osprey Hawke, as they reached Mandeville Crescent, North.

The demon went in, and up stairs, but he broke nothing beyond the fact that Halgoover was paying the cab. Arabella prepared for a gush of overwhelming welcome.

"I introduce to you the member for Stackleborough," said the fiend, taking his friend's hand.

Arabella sprang up. The M.P. removed his hat. Mr. Thomas Moore has described what happened when the Veiled Prophet unveiled to Zelica.

Sir Cresswell Cresswell, in giving judgment, said,

* * * *

[N.B. I hereby interdict any hairdresser, respectable or otherwise, from adding a neat sentence, and converting the above into a puff for any Oil of Jehoshaphat or Limpid Balm of Harabia.]

SHIRLEY BROOKS.

THE QUEEN OF THE ARENA.



"Yes, he's only got three more points, and then he'll come: he don't go in in the Sylph scene."

Three fainter peals of laughter told that the three points had hit, but not as well as the Quaker Story; and then he came in.

"Well," said he, "how is she now?" in a voice whose anxiety contrasted most strangely with his tawdry dress, that of tumbling clown at a travelling circus. "How is she now?"

"I'm better, Bill," said the woman. "Can you stop a little?"

"Yes; I don't go in next, it's Chapman's turn;" and so saying, the man seated himself by the side of the woman.

She was still young, and, as far as the dim light hung from the roof would enable a judgment to be formed, good-looking; the cork-grimed eyebrows, cracked lips, and dry cheeks, told that she too had

It was a strange scene. The waggon was close to the circus, formed indeed part of it—the poor woman was lying on the low shelf, called the bed, of the travelling caravan; two or three of the wives of the men attached to the exhibition were round her, endeavouring by their exertions to relieve momentarily increasing pain, and helping her to bear it patiently by their sympathy.

"He ought to have been here half an hour ago," said one of the women. "Jim started for him on the piebald two hours since?"

"Did he take the piebald?" said another. "Why I thought he was in the *Italian Lovers*?"

"No, he wouldn't run with the spotted mare, so they've put the blind grey with her, and took the piebald in the quadrille for Dick Gravel to take bottom couple with."

The explanation seemed satisfactory, for silence ensued.

Presently a roar of such laughter as is only heard in a circus at a country village,—fresh, genuine, hearty,—shook the sides of the frail vehicle.

"What's that?" said the apparently dying woman.

"Only your Bill's Quaker story," said one.

"O, then he'll soon be here, won't he?" said she.

appeared before the public for its amusement; indeed the traces of rouge were still on parts of the face, and told too truly that she had lain there but a short time, only since the last evening's performance: indeed, when, during one of her jumps through the hoop, a man's putting on his hat startled the horse, and so caused a false step, which brought her heavily to the ground. The experienced ring-master saw she could scarcely stand, and handed her out, kissing her hand in the usual style, and few, if any, of the spectators knew that when rapturously applauding the most unparalleled feat, the leap from the horse's back through the hoop to the ground, their applause was unheard by their intended object. She had fainted immediately on reaching the dressing-room, and was at once carried to the moving chamber where she now lay.

But to return. She took his hand in hers, saying: "Bill, I don't think I shall go round any more."

"Don't say so, lass, it'll be all right when the doctor comes."

"No, Bill; I feel better, but something tells me I've put on the togs for the last time."

"No, lass, no!" was all the utterance he could find. "Don't say so!"

After a pause, she said: "Bill, you recollect that London chap with the French name, that came down to the Doncaster races?"

"O, yes, I know," said the man, half angrily, as if wishing to avoid the subject.

"Well, you know you said that time that you thought there was something between me and him."

"Well, I know it," said the man, "but don't think of that now; don't trouble about that now."

"But I must, Bill. I think I'm dying, Bill, dear, and I should like you to think of me when I'm gone, as I am truly, Bill."

The man made no answer.

"Bill," said the woman, with increasing vehemence of manner, "do you believe I'd tell you a lie now?"

No answer still.

"Bill! Do you think I'd tell you a lie now?" said she, as though her life depended on his answer.

"No, no, lass," said he at last, "I don't think you'd tell a lie any time—but now—" and he hesitated.

"Where's Jenny?" interrupted the woman.

"Here," said one of the youngest women, standing up, so that she might be seen. "What do you want?"

"Jenny, you'll find the key of the green trunk in the china mug with 'Nelly' on it. I wish you'd look in the box, and get me my old Bible out."

The girl found the key, and asked where the box was.

"O dear, I forgot, it's under me," said the woman.

"There, never mind," said he, "I don't want any fuss about it."

"O, Bill, dear, I wish you'd lift me up a little, and pull it out. You can put the broken chair under to keep me up then."

"No, never mind," said he, "it'll pain you so."

"O, Bill, dear, I don't mind, I wish you would."

He did it at last; and, after some trouble and a few suppressed groans, the box was pulled out to the middle of the floor, opened, and there, wrapped up in paper and neatly hid, was the Bible; the paper greasy, from contact with disused head-dresses, garlands, bands, and other small accessories of the dress of the Queen of the Arena. They gave it to the woman, who soon asked, "Where's Mary?"

"O, she is here now," said one of the women; and a girl about five came running in: she had only been performing the part of a little fairy in the just-finished scene; her wand was still in her hand, and the gauze wings on her shoulders; she took them off, laid down the silvered stick, and came to the bed.

"Mary, dear, are you there?"

"Yes, mother, I'm just done, and the people clapped so when Julia took me on her shoulder."

"Put her on the box, she can't see her," suggested some one: it was pushed to where the child stood, and then the mother said:

"Mary, I'm going away."

"O, mother, where to?"

"But before I go, I want you to see me and father friends again." The child stared with wonder; but the woman, not heeding her, continued: "Bill, dear, have you got the paper off the Bible? Well, open it at the New Testament."

"Here one of you women find it. Jenny, will you?" said the man.

Jenny did it, and gave it back.

"Now, Bill, raise me up a little."

"O, never mind," said he, "I know you'll get hurt."

She only looked a repetition of her request; and then taking the open book from his hands, said: "Bill, dear, you know you said there was something wrong between that London chap and me. I told you at the time there was not, and you didn't believe me, though you didn't say so; and you don't believe it now," she said, with increased energy. "Now, Bill, hear me swear that, as I believe I'm a dying woman, there was nothing between us, and this child's your own, as much as Mary, there, is." She kissed the book, and said: "Do you believe me now?"

"Yes, yes," said the man, "I do, I do!" as though some spell over him had broken. "I do, Nell, I do! O, Nell! what a fool I've been, and what a coward not to believe it before! O, Nell! forgive me, forgive me, I've done you wrong!"

The woman raised herself by a great effort, to reach his hand, and kissing it, said: "I do, Bill. I knew you'd do me justice some day."

"O, Nell, it's not too late—not too late! You'll get better, and we'll be as happy as we were before this."

The woman only drew his head to her, and kissed him; while he, roused, kissed her again and again. "You do believe me, don't you, dear?"

"O, forgive me, Nell! O, forgive me!" were the only words he could find in the rush of his newly found trust.

"Bill's wanted," shouted some one at the door.

"Old Whip's called you three times."

"Here's the white, Bill," said Jenny, "you want touching;" and she brought it, and stood with the lamp while he painted out the traces of tears on his cheeks in front of a broken looking-glass.

"The red will do, Bill; go on, or you'll have him in here, and she won't like that."

Bill went out, and the doctor arrived a few minutes afterwards. He was a short, stout, good-humoured-looking man, with a brisk way of speaking, that at once secured obedience.

"Now, then," said he, "what's amiss? I could make nothing of that fellow you sent after me. Ah!" said he, altering his tone as his eyes, growing used to the light, took in the woman's face on the bed.

"What do they call you?" turning to the youngest of the assembled women.

"Jenny, sir."

"Will you stop. All the rest go."

The women grumblingly obeyed, and he stooped down to examine his patient.

"When did this happen, Jenny?"

"Last night, sir."

"Why didn't you send before?"

"We did send to one here in the village, but he wouldn't come, because she belonged to the circus. He sent her this," handing him a paper.

"Umph! 'The World and its Amusements on the Broad Way.' Just like that sanctimonious Jennings. Sends the woman a tract, and lets her suffer all day long."

"Doctor," said the sick woman, "how long can I live."

"Live, woman! why, you're good for another forty years yet."

"No, doctor, I'm not—I feel I'm not long for this world."

"Oh! all nonsense!" said he, "you'll soon get over this." And with like comforting assurances he sought to raise her from his depressed condition. In about ten minutes he went to the door and said, "Come in here, one of you, while I go to the gig." He soon came back, and the woman remained with him.

In a little while the Clown came up to the group of women outside the door, and leaning in all attitudes against the sides and steps of the waggon.

"Well, has he come?"

"Yes, he has been in this quarter of an hour."

"What does he say?"

"Oh! she'll do," he says, didn't he?" said one of them, turning to another for confirmation.

He soon left, and his voice was heard shouting some old witicism of the ring as though there were no such things as sick wives and doctors in the world. In a few minutes more he came again quite out of breath from a last somersault, the approbation of which was still heard. Seeing the door partially open he entered, and his face looked joyous, as the wail of a child greeted him.

"Which is it? A boy?"

"Yes," said Jenny.

The answer was unheard by him, for there—stretched out in death—lay the mother. Contrary to the doctor's expectation the accident and premature delivery had caused her death.

Yes! There she lay; the hollow sunken eyes—made unnaturally bright by the traces of rouge upon her cheeks—the jaw fallen. Death was evidently there and he saw it. She with whom he had hoped to share all the cares and joys of life; now that the only difference they had ever had was removed. She was dead! The man seemed stunned. A strange pair they looked;—he in the motley and paint of his calling; she—dead!

"Bear up, Bill," said Jenny, approaching him with the child; "it's a boy, Bill; and she wanted it to be called after you."

The man seemed not to hear, but, walking up to the bed, and taking one of the dead hands in his, kissed it gently, as though afraid of waking her; and then, as though his loss had just been realised, muttered, "Dead! dead!" and lay down, his face close to hers, kissing the fast cooling lips with frantic earnestness.

"Dead—dead—dead!" still came between his

choking sobs. To him the women, moving to and fro in offices about the child, were not: to him, useless was the doctor's farewell. "Dead—dead—dead!" and the heaving chest and bursting eyeballs found relief in tears.

"There, don't take on so, Bill!" said one, trying to raise him; "don't take on so hard, Bill!"

She might as well have spoken to the box on which he half sat, half leaned, as he hung over his dead wife. They then tried to get to close the staring eyes; but a look which appalled them shook their nerves too much to allow of a second trial. A noise outside now attracted them to the door.

"What's the matter, now?"

"Matter, enough!" said a harsh, grating voice.

"Here's Chapman so drunk he can't go in, and Bill's skulking because his wife's sick; there never was a fellow in the ring worse treated than I am."

"She is dead, Whips," said one, pointing with her thumb back to the waggon.

"Dead!" said he.

"Yes; and he's there, too."

"Well, if that ain't too bad," said he: "here's the last scene before the quadrille, and no clown—it'll ruin the circus. The second night, too; her last night's jump has filled the place—there ain't standing room—and they've been calling for her all the evening. Dead," said he again, as though his loss were caused by her neglect. "Who'd have thought it? What's to be done?"

"Can't you make Chapman do?"

"No, he's a fool any time to Bill, and now he's drunk he's no use at all. What's to be done? I don't know."

Here he was obliged to leave, for the uproar in the circus was deafening. "Clown! Clown!" was the only cry they would make. In vain did Whips drive the horses faster and faster, till the "Corsican Brothers" were nearly in a horizontal position with their speed; nothing would appease the now excited people.

Whips came out again. "Where's Bill?" said he.

"Here, Bill," said Jenny, "Whips wants you."

"Who wants me?" said the man.

"Here, Bill, I do," said the voice at the door.

Jenny gave the child to one of the women, took him by the arm, and led him to the door.

"Bill," said Whips, "here's Chapman as drunk as a beast, and the people crying out for you like mad. Can't you go?"

"Go!" said he, pointing to the body. "How can I go? No, I can't go."

"Well, Bill, you must; it's only the second night, here's the queen away and no clown."

"Well, there's only the Indian warrior to go in," said Bill.

"Well, I know that, but what's the good of him without somebody to give him his things? What's the good of my giving him his club and bow, or the paddle either? No, Bill, you must go: it won't do to send in any one else now, they'd pull the place down."

Here another and louder cry reached them.

"There now," said Whips, "that's it; there's the 'Corsican Brothers' has been agoing round this quarter of an hour, till they're sick of it, and

the grey'll be so lame to-morrow she won't stir a peg. It's no use, Bill, you must go."

"I can't, Whips; it'll be no use if I do."

"O, yes, you will; you *must* go, or I'll have to throw up the agreement, and you know you've overdrawn your money this last two weeks."

"Well, I know it," said the man, evidently irresolute now at this threat.

"Well, then, go in if it's only five minutes. Here, take a drink of this, it will give you heart."

The man took the proffered flask, and drank deeply.

"Well," said Whips, "you'll go, Bill, won't you?"

"O, yes, I'll go," said the man, "go on."

They left the waggon, and the repeated rounds of applause showed that the public was satisfied. The clown was never more witty, never more agile. Somersault after somersault, leap after leap was taken with a recklessness that nothing could equal; again and again the encores of the elite, and the braves of the vulgar, spurred his exertions. At last it ended, and the quadrille came on. The clown left the ring, with the plaudits ringing in his ears, and came to the waggon to find—Alas! What?

At the conclusion of the quadrille those in the waggon heard a cry.



"What is it!" said the man, now in his old position, close to the body, with her hand locked in his, and his eyes fixed on her face. "What's that?"

"They're calling for *her*," said Jenny, pointing to the form in the bed.

There was a lull, and then a long thunder of clapping hands and stamping feet, rose and died away.

"What's that last?" asked the woman, holding the child, of a person entering.

"O! they called for the queen, and old Whips made a speech, and said she was rather unwell, and could not appear, but would most likely be better to-morrow, when she would again perform her celebrated feat of leaping through the hoop to the ground."

"Well, my dears," said the doctor, at the sup-

per-table to his children, "How did you like it?"

"O! we didn't see the queen, father."

"No?"

"No, not at all; the man in the ring said she was not well, but would be there to-morrow, and the clown was so good, father, in the scene with the savage."

"Was he, my dear. Do you know why you didn't see the queen?"

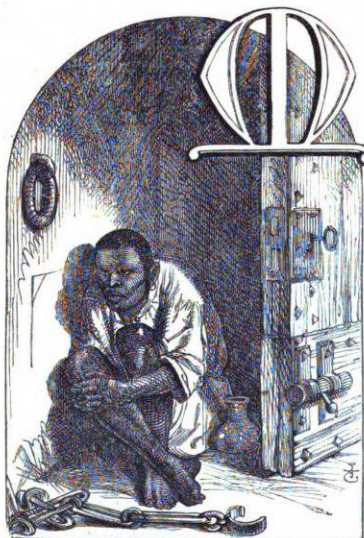
"No."

"Well, then, I'll tell you. Because she was *dead*. That clown was her husband, I left him kissing her dead lips, and I daresay he is there now. It's a strange world this! Such a sight as that I never saw before, and hope never to see again."

A. S. H.

MY FRIEND THE GOVERNOR.

(A COLONIAL INCIDENT.)



My friend was Governor of a known British dependency; and, as his colony was not of the highest class, it involved on his part the performance of miscellaneous functions towards a limited but mixed population. Inter alia, he had occasionally to act as Chief Justice, with the obligation of dealing with the iniquities of certain gentlemen of colour, as well as with those of his white compatriots. Had Quashee, according to Mr. Carlyle's theory, been a mere indolent pumpkin-eater, the function in question might have been despatched with the assistance of a little cowhide. But Quashee, to the confutation of Jean Jacques Rousseau, occasionally broke out in more violent fashion; and in one case where this amounted to arson, rape, or murder, my friend was obliged to sentence Quashee to be executed.

Quashee was, however, condemned to be hung before it was discovered that there was no official hangman in the colony; and my friend the Governor therefore found himself in an executive difficulty, and was obliged to solicit unprofessional assistance. Notwithstanding he exerted all his influence to procure the required functionary, nobody in all the colony, white or black, would hang Quashee. In his perplexity, my friend wrote to the then Secretary of State for the Colonial Department, detailing the circumstances and the difficulty which had arisen, and asking for instructions in a matter so important. The Colonial Secretary, confined himself to an acknowledgment of the despatch and to an intimation, conveyed in complimentary terms, that the Colonial Office

had so high an opinion of the Governor himself, that they left the matter to his sole discretion.

In this dilemma, the Governor inquired into the culprit's antecedents, and ascertained that he was the subject of a certain king in the interior, with whom it was considered desirable that we should be on terms of amity; so naturally the thought suggested itself of getting rid of the difficulty and conciliating a native by a stroke of diplomacy. The Governor wrote a letter to the sable potentate, intimating confidentially that if his majesty desired a remission of the sentence, and would be pleased to make his desire known to the Governor, he himself, on the part of the British Government, would not only forego its execution, but to oblige his Majesty, would set the prisoner at liberty and send him home.

His Majesty in reply acknowledged the receipt of the Governor's courteous communication, but declined to avail himself of the offer, because, as he substantially put it, the prisoner was the greatest scoundrel in his dominions; and, therefore, it would better please his Majesty that he should be hanged to save trouble.

Again the Governor was reduced to the extreme of perplexity, and, as a last resort, he resolved to confer with the criminal himself. Walking down to the jail in the dusk of the evening, he explained to the prisoner that he was a very violent and wicked person, that he had now been confined a long time, as was hoped, to the reformation of his wicked ways; and therefore, if he would promise to conduct himself properly for the future, he (the Governor) was disposed to show him mercy, and grant him life and liberty. To his surprise Quashee replied, in a tone of surly objection, that liberty was of no use to him; that if he were let out of prison he expected nothing but insult and misery; while on the other hand, as he was now heartily sick of confinement, and had been sentenced to be hanged, he expected to be hanged accordingly. At this last rebuff the Governor felt there was but one alternative; so he returned to the Government House, gave some private directions, and that same night the prisoner was turned out of prison, and the prison-doors were locked against his re-entry.

But so far from the Governor's difficulty being removed by this course, it now took the shape of a regular persecution. On the following morning Quashee watched the Governor from his house, and with loud cries demanded summary justice; and from this time, whenever the Governor went in or out, or to or from his court—whether he was alone or in company—there was Quashee at his heels, insisting on his right to be hanged.

So completely was the Governor wearied by this pertinacity, that in the end he resolved to quit the colony, and to return to his practice at the English Bar. Here he has happily succeeded in obtaining professional equivalents for the loss of his official position, and he can now take a pleasant retrospect of his former colonial difficulty.

R. S. W.

GUESTS AT THE RED LION.



r's now nigh on for ten years since the Red Lion and I parted company. The Red Lion was once the best house in Tunstone, but the railway knocked up the coaches, and that knocked up the business, and I was glad to get away while I had anything to get away with.

My wife (God bless her!) I shall never see again in this world. She was very lame, and couldn't get about without help; so

she sat for the most part in the little snugery behind the bar, which I had fitted up for her as nice as money could make it. Her birdcage hung from the ceiling, and in a warm corner near the fire there was a hassock, which was the special property of her tabby. Opposite to where my wife sat was a little mahogany cupboard let into the wall, the door of which was generally half open, so that when she looked up from her sewing or knitting, she could see ranged on the shelves the famous old china which her grandmother gave her for a wedding present; and above it, the silver teapot, the gilt candle-cup, &c.; and, at the top of all, the great punch-bowl, which was used only on our grand occasions: all of which articles she used to take much pleasure in looking at. Her room was divided from the bar by a glass-door, which she could open and shut at pleasure; so that when any friend or acquaintance dropped in, she could, if so minded, have a chat with them; and though she sat there day after day, and month after month, it's my opinion that she knew more about the Tunstone people, and their private affairs, than any other person in the town, except, perhaps, my head-waiter, Jim Topping. A very decent sort of fellow he was—middle-aged, brown, lean, with a stoop of the shoulders, and only one eye; but that one as sharp as a gimlet, and equal to the two eyes of most people. Poor fellow! he has been dead these seven years; and lies in Tunstone churchyard, with the finest double daisy growing on his grave that could be had for love or money. It was a flower he was always fond of, so I had one planted over him out of compliment to his memory.

It was one December afternoon, the very winter we had that long black frost, when I heard Jim talking to my wife.

"I've put them into Number Nine," says he, "and a very nice couple they seem to be. Cutlets and a chicken for dinner, M'm."

"Where do they come from, Jim?" says I.

"From the railway-station," says Jim; "fur-

ther than that I can't say. Name on the luggage is Oldwink."

I was not long before I went up-stairs to pay my respects. When I entered the room, the gentleman was standing with his hands under his coat-tails, looking very earnestly through his spectacles at a print over the chimney-piece.

"After Gainsborough, eh?" he was saying. "Great painter, Gainsborough. This is in his best style. Background well filled in; side lights skilfully introduced; pyramidal grouping strictly observed. Full of merit, my dear. A wonderful painting. The original is in the gallery of my friend Lord Papyrus. Ah, landlord, is that you?"

The speaker was a portly, well-built, middle-aged gentleman. His cheeks and chin were well filled out, and he had a hearty colour in his face; he had a hearty voice too—rich and full, that sounded as if he had a sugarplum always in his mouth. He had not a great deal of hair left, but what he had was brushed and frizzled, and made the most of. A large old-fashioned brooch held his white cravat in its place; and his feet were encased in shoes and gaiters. He had a well-fed, comfortable look, such as a landlord likes to see; and I set him down at first sight either for a retired doctor, a clergyman out for a holiday, or a gentleman living on his private means.

The lady was considerably younger than her husband. She was rather sharp-featured, and rather hard of hearing. I think, too, that she said a little; but many ladies do that, and are thought none the worse of for it.

"We think of staying a few days with you, Jobson, if we are suited. We shall, in fact, probably stay Sunday over. We have been travelling a great deal lately, and Mrs. Oldwink requires a little rest and quiet.—You require a little rest and quiet, eh, my dear?" he said, elevating his voice, and addressing the lady.

"O, yes, certainly, a little rest and quiet," she replied with a nod of the head, and fell to work on some crochet again, as if for dear life.

"Her health is hardly what it ought to be," resumed Mr. Oldwink, in a low impressive tone. "But we must get you to drive us out, Jobson, for an hour or two every day; and try the effect of this pure country air. I trust that your sherry will bear investigation."

I went down-stairs deeply impressed with the affability of Mr. Oldwink, and fetched up a bottle out of a private bin, which was never touched except on special occasions. After dinner, Mr. Oldwink drank his wine, and read the daily paper; and we heard no more either of him or his lady till the following morning.

The same evening another stranger arrived at the Red Lion, who walked direct into the commercial room, and ordered tea and a bed. We somehow took him for a commercial gentleman, but he had no luggage with him, except a very small carpet-bag.

He just walked in, ordered his tea, asked what company there was in the house; and then, saying he had got the toothache very bad, tied a red silk

handkerchief round his head, and getting into a warm corner, never stirred out of it till he went to bed.

Next morning came a letter directed to Mr. Purkiss, which he claimed, so of course his name was Purkiss. That was all we learned about him. As for his appearance, it was neither gentlemanly nor vulgar, but midway between the two. He was dressed in a suit of brown clothes; and was altogether a quiet, common-place sort of fellow. He still complained of the toothache, and kept the red handkerchief bound round his face; he said he should not stir out that day, but try what a little nursing of himself would do towards taking away the pain.

Half an hour after that, when I set off to drive Mr. and Mrs. Oldwink round the town, looking through the window I saw Mr. Purkiss walking up and down, with his head tied up, and his hand pressed against his cheek. He brightened up for a moment as we passed, and came to the window to see us off.

I drove Mr. and Mrs. Oldwink through Tunstone and round Tunstone, and pointed out all the interesting places I could think of. Mr. Oldwink seemed to be a gentleman of much information, and made learned remarks on everything we examined. Mrs. Oldwink had not much to say, but appeared to be so greatly gratified with the outing, that Mr. Oldwink arranged another for the following day.

When I reached home, I was greatly surprised at finding Mr. Purkiss seated comfortably in the snugger with my wife. This was a favour seldom granted to any but very old friends, and I hardly knew what to think at seeing a stranger there. I suppose my wife's soft heart had been first drawn toward him by the report of his toothache; and as he took all the remedies recommended by her, she hardly knew how to praise him enough, and said he was the nicest gentleman she had seen for a long time.

I drove out Mr. and Mrs. Oldwink every forenoon. We visited every place of interest for miles round Tunstone; and Mr. Oldwink made me tell him everything I knew about each place we visited; and always added to what I said a few moral remarks of his own, so that I became more certain than ever that he was a clergyman away from home on a holiday; and when I just hinted the matter to him (for I confess I was curious about it), he only smiled, and said I might have been further out in my guess.

As for Mr. Purkiss, I give you my word that he grew more of a puzzle to me every day. Neither Jim nor I knew what to make of him; and when Jim didn't know what to make of a man, that gimlet eye of his always did double duty in the way of keeping watch. He and I laid our heads together about it, you may be sure; but the more we thought about it, the more in the dark we seemed to be; and though Mr. Purkiss was a quiet, inoffensive, civil-spoken man enough, yet, as I've always found, the less we know of people the more inclined we are to judge hardly of them. If he had any business to do in Tunstone, he seemed in no hurry to do it; for he seldom went out, and never for more than half an hour at a time—and

that of itself was very suspicious—but was generally moving up and down the house from one room to another, as people having the toothache often will do; and Jim found it hard work dodging about after him so as not to let him know he was watched.

Well, Christmas Eve arrived, and all our guests departed except Mr. and Mrs. Oldwink and Mr. Purkiss, and they informed me that they intended staying over Christmas Day. Now, during all the years I was in the public line, I made a point of asking any company we might have in the house to dine with me at my own table on Christmas Day; and I don't think that any of them could ever say that I gave them a shabby dinner or a poor bottle of wine at such times. I kept up the custom in the present instance, and was pleased that my invitation was not refused. My old friend Scatterer, who makes a capital fourth at a rubber, did not neglect to come; and we all sat down on Christmas Day as comfortable a little party as you need wish to look at. It would have done anybody's eyes good to have seen Mr. Oldwink, as he sat on my left hand, looking so beaming and affable as he uttered a grace for the seasonable bounties of roast goose and onion sauce.

As soon as the cloth was removed, I could see that Scatterer was fidgeting for the cards to be brought out; so I made bold to ask Mr. Oldwink whether he would make one at a quiet rubber.

"Why, really, my friends," he remarked, "it is very seldom that I touch a card; in fact, I am a novice at all games of chance or skill; but, on an occasion of this sort, I should be very sorry to mar the festivity. Do not, however, expect much from me. Let the stakes be low, if you please; just sufficient to give an interest to the game. Say half-crown points—I could not conscientiously play for more; with, if you like, an extra shilling on the odd trick."

Scatterer and I opened our eyes; we had never played for more than a shilling a corner; but, of course, we did not say so; so it was settled at half-a-crown. As for Mr. Purkiss, when I asked him, he said in his quiet way that he should be happy to do as the rest of the company did. So we cut for partners; and, as it fell out, it was Scatterer and Mr. Oldwink against Mr. Purkiss and myself.

Mr. Oldwink passed me his snuff-box while Scatterer was dealing.

"A remarkable box that, Jobson," he observed, seeing that I was admiring it. "It was presented to me by the Emperor of Russia, in return for a secret service which I rendered his majesty during the time I was travelling through his dominions. He sent me this snuff-box, and an autograph letter of thanks. Diamonds trumps. Knave turned up."

Mr. Purkiss held out his hand for the box, but Mr. Oldwink took it up, and put it in his pocket; perhaps he did not like to have it fingered by strangers.

The luck of Scatterer and his partner was something astonishing; they won rubber after rubber, while our scores were scarcely worth counting; but I must say it was chiefly owing to the splendid cards held by Mr. Oldwink. I could not understand how it was that, when that gentleman

dealt, he invariably turned up an honour, and had generally two more of the same suit to keep it company, with a long hand of something else to follow. I don't think I'm a bad-tempered fellow, but really I began to feel very aggravated at losing one half-crown after another in the manner I did; but Mr. Purkiss, who of course lost as much as I did, was so cool and quiet, that I was ashamed to display my ill-feeling. At the conclusion of the fourth rubber, Mr. Purkiss got up, turned his chair round three times, and then sat down again. Scatterer rubbed his chin, and was evidently puzzled. Mr. Purkiss smiled.

"When I was a lad," said he, "I remember hearing my grandmother say, that when you were unlucky at cards it was a good thing to turn your chair round three times; so we may as well try an old wife's remedy."

It may seem hard to believe, but it is nevertheless a fact, that, after my partner had turned his chair, he never failed, when it was his deal, to turn up an honour, and hold two more in his hand, so that the next two rubbers were won by us. At the end of the second, Mr. Oldwink got up, rather hastily as it seemed, and said he was tired of playing; and Mr. Purkiss had a quiet laugh to himself in a corner. So I opened a fresh box of cheroots, and the cards were put away.

Next morning, as I was coming down-stairs, Mr. Oldwink called me into his room, and shut the door.

"Who is that Mr. Purkiss who was playing with us last night?" he asked.

"I know no more of him than you do, sir. He sits in the commercial-room; he has been here four days; and how much longer he intends staying I don't know."

"To speak the truth, Jobson, I don't like the looks of the man."

"I'm no great admirer of him myself, sir."

"Mind, Jobson, I don't say the man is not an honest man, nor a meritorious man, and I am merely speaking in your interest, Jobson—for such a matter can in no other way concern me—when I say, keep your eye on the spoons. I hope I am not wronging the man when I state it as my opinion—and conscientiously I state it—that he has somewhat of a hang-dog countenance."

I was much obliged to Mr. Oldwink for putting me on my guard, and so I told him. I then went down to Jim, and consulted with him as to what ought to be done. Jim had nothing to advise, except that he should still continue to keep his eye on Mr. Purkiss. He agreed with me that it was rather a suspicious case; and at last suggested that the opinion of Mrs. Jobson should be taken. So together we went to my wife, and opened the matter to her. We, however, gained no advantage by the proceeding. She called Jim and me a pair of old fools; declared that Mr. Purkiss was one of the nicest gentlemen she had ever come across, and gave it as her opinion that Mr. Oldwink was nothing better than a humbug. Jim and I retired discomfited, and talked the matter over again in the pantry. Jim's gimlet eye did double duty for the remainder of the day.

It was a relief to all parties when Mr. Purkiss asked for his bill next morning, and desired that his carpet-bag might be sent to the station. He took a very polite farewell of my wife, saying he hoped soon to have the pleasure of seeing her again.

When I told Mr. Oldwink that Mr. Purkiss was gone, he smiled blandly upon me, and rubbed his fingers gently through his hair. "It is well," said he. "It was your interest I had at heart, Jobson, in saying what I did; but, if I am anything of a physiognomist, that man is destined either to be hanged or transported. And now, my good friend, in ten minutes Mrs. Oldwink and I will be ready for our usual matutinal drive."

Two mornings after this, Mr. Oldwink again sent for me up-stairs.

"Jobson," said he, "be good enough to let me have my bill in half-an-hour from this time. Mrs. Oldwink and I depart by the 11:45 train; but previously we shall take a walk into the town to purchase a few little mementoes of our visit to Tunstone. Mrs. Oldwink desires me to say that she has been very much gratified by your attention and evident desire to please. Speaking for myself, I may also express a similar feeling; and I may add that I shall not fail to recommend the Red Lion to my friend Sir Rufus Bloomsbury, who, I believe, intends coming down here in May for a fortnight's fishing. In half-an-hour from this time, if you please."

Mr. and Mrs. Oldwink went out, and returned in about half-an-hour, carrying two or three small parcels. The bill was looked over, and paid without a murmur. Mr. Oldwink's luggage stood ready to be conveyed to the station.

"Jobson," said that gentleman, suddenly, as if the thought had but just struck him, "it would not be amiss, I think, if you were to get your trap out and drive Mrs. Oldwink and myself as far as Deepwood, the first station on the line to London. It is a suggestion of my wife's—and not a bad one, I think. By driving fast, we should be just in time to catch the 11:45 train from here. What say you? Would the mare do it in the time?"

"I'll warrant her, sir," I replied. "The trap shall be ready in three minutes."

So it was—and we all three got in. The luggage, which was not heavy, was put under the seat, and down Highgate we whirled at a spanking pace, and in five minutes Tunstone was left behind. Our ride was pleasant, but short, for Deepwood was only five miles off. Mr. Oldwink praised my mare to the skies, and listened to me with much attention while I mentioned all her good points, and told him what way her best qualities might be brought out by one who understood her. We were just driving into Deepwood when I noticed Mr. Oldwink fumbling with his pockets. A moment after, he turned to me, looking very serious and alarmed.

"Jobson," said he, "I find that I have left my purse and a packet of very important papers on the sitting-room table of the Red Lion. What is to be done?"

"Don't know, sir, I'm sure, unless we drive back for them," said I, letting the mare drop into

a walk. "Or will you go forward, and let me send them to your address through post?"

"It's not that I care much for the purse, but the documents are of great importance to me. Let me consider what will be the best plan to adopt."

He laid his finger on his lips, and thought for a few moments.

"I have it!" said he, brightening up. "A train for Tunstone passes here in five minutes from this time. Jobson, will you return by it, and obtain the purse and the papers? We must let the 11:45 go on without us; but there is another train at 12:30 from Tunstone which stops here—you will just have time to get the articles and return by it. We will meet it at the station here, and go forward by it, after paying you for your trouble, and you will return home with the mare. Will you so far oblige me?"

Such a request it was impossible to refuse. We saw the train approaching. I jumped out of the trap, ran to the station and took my ticket; and, looking out of the window as the train started, I saw Mr. Oldwink drawing up at the door of the railway hotel, and preparing to alight.

When I got out of the train at Tunstone, who should I see on the platform but Mr. Purkiss. He gave me a nod and held up his finger; but, as I had no time to lose, I pretended not to have seen him, and dived into the crowd; but when I reached the door, there he was again.

"Mr. Jobson, I want to speak to you a minute."

"Can't stay now, Mr. Purkiss. Another time I shall be most happy."

"Another time won't do. Now listen to me. Where have you left Mr. Oldwink?"

"I don't know what right you have to ask the question, but I left the gentleman you name at Deepwood."

"Did he pay his bill before leaving the Red Lion?"

"Certainly he did. But really, Mr. —"

"Now don't lose your temper. He paid you with a twenty-pound Bank of England note, did he not?"

"He did."

"The note is a forged one. Got it about you?"

"No; it's at home."

"Well, I tell you again, it's a forged one; and, more than that, that your friend, Mr. Oldwink, is one of the most notorious swindlers in the three kingdoms."

You might have knocked me down with a cork when I heard Mr. Purkiss say these words.

"And who are you, sir?" I at length contrived to stammer out. "And how came you to know all these things?"

"I am an officer of the Detective Force. I have had my eye on Mr. Oldwink for some time, but he is such a slippery customer that it was difficult to prove anything against him. I tracked him to your house; and then, as I was quite a stranger to him, I took up my quarters there, in order to watch him more closely. But he began to suspect me after a while, as did you also, Jobson, in another fashion; so that I found it advisable to leave the Red Lion. But I did not lose sight of my gentleman; for though you

thought I had left the town, I was, in reality, snugly located at the Green Dragon, opposite your house; where I received confidential communications from your wife respecting Mr. Oldwink, by a trusty messenger, every two hours during the day. Don't look so wild, Jobson, or people will think you are losing your wits. Well, this morning I was informed that Oldwink was going to make a few purchases previous to leaving Tunstone by the 11:45 train; so I set my man to watch him, and note all the shops he favoured with his custom. As soon as he was housed again in the Red Lion, I took a banker's clerk with me, and went the same round he had taken. The result was, that we found he had purchased nearly a hundred pounds' worth of jewellery at different shops, together with a small parcel of valuable velvets; for all of which he had paid with forged notes, receiving the change in gold and silver. This done, I posted off to the station, expecting to nab my gentleman on the platform with the property on him. But he was too deep for me: the 11:45 departed, and he never came; and my man has just been down to inform me that he and you had set off by road. And now I'm off to Deepwood by the train, which starts in five minutes; so do you just get a nip of brandy to keep your clockwork in order, and then go back with me; and slippery as he is, see if I don't lay hold of him yet."

Judge what my feelings were while I listened to Mr. Purkiss's story. I was ready to bite my thumbs off with vexation.

When we reached Deepwood, no Mr. Oldwink was to be seen; and my companion laughed at me when I expressed my surprise at not finding him there.

"To think you should expect such a thing!" said he. "Why he is miles off by this time, unless your mare has broken down." Here was another blow for me, for I had had no idea that he would take off with my mare. "It would not do for him to travel by rail," added Mr. Purkiss, as an afterthought. "He was afraid of the telegraph."

We found on inquiry at the railway inn, that the old scamp had stayed there about five minutes only, to bait the mare, and take some refreshment; and then, after asking a few questions respecting the roads, had set off at a good pace northward. In three minutes we had a gig out, a horse in the shafts, and ourselves seated behind it; and after learning which road the fugitives had taken, set off after them as hard as we could go.

"And Mrs. Oldwink, what of her?" said I to my companion.

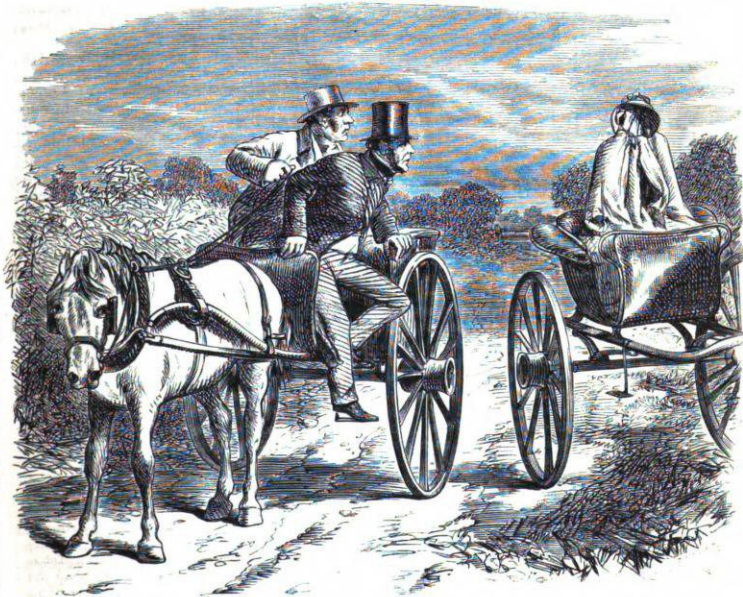
"Birds of a feather—you know the rest," he replied, biting off the end of a cigar.

It was a raw and bitter afternoon, with showers of sleety rain at intervals. The horse that carried us along was a good one, pretty near equal to my mare, and fresh to begin with. So on we went, over hill and dale, through a very wild and lonely country; every mile, as it seemed, leading us farther away from any town or village; and with but one wayside inn to break the solitude, at which we stayed for a few minutes

to bait our horse, and where we gathered tidings that made us hasten on again. We had got, perhaps, a matter of ten or twelve miles from Deepwood, when Mr. Purkiss suddenly flung the cigar out of his mouth, gave the horse a sharp lash that made it bound madly forward, and pushing his hat tighter over his brows, gave vent to a smothered "Hurrah!" There they were before us.

It was some minutes before they found out that they were followed. Mrs. Oldwink, happening to turn her head, was the first to see us; next her husband gave a backward glance; and then, half-rising in his seat, lashed into my poor mare in a style that made my blood boil to see. Though

we did our best, the distance between us gradually increased; and in one sense I could hardly regret that it was so, since it proved so plainly the superior bottom of my mare. There was not a word spoken for some time, so great was our anxiety. It had become a question of speed and endurance between the two horses. The road, which had been level and straight for some distance, came at length to a considerable hill, nearly covered by a thick plantation of young trees, up the side of which it wound with a sharp curve. The gig before us passed out of sight when it reached this bend of the road, while we were still a considerable distance from it. When we came up to the curve, we saw that there was another



bend in the opposite direction higher up the face of the hill, and that Oldwink had passed the second corner before we reached the first, and was therefore still out of view. The hill was so steep that we were obliged to allow the mare to walk up it, for fear of blowing her completely. What then was our surprise, on passing the second corner, to find the gig and its occupants only about fifty yards a-head of us. Purkiss rubbed his eyes as though he could hardly believe them. But there the fugitives were, real enough; for Oldwink was looking over his shoulder as we turned the corner, and on seeing us took off his hat, and moved to us as though wishing us Good day.

"Must have halted here a minute or two to breathe the mare," said Mr. Purkiss, after cogitating for a few moments.

"He needn't have done so," said I, "if he had understood how to manage her."

Oldwink moved rapidly a-head, and gradually placed the former distance between us.

The afternoon was beginning to darken, and the mists to creep down the hill-sides. The road, though level, had now become very crooked; and the gig before us was out of sight as often as not. Oldwink himself frequently looked back, but Mrs. Oldwink sat calm and upright beside him, and never noticed us even with a glance.

We had got, as near as I can reckon, about three

miles past the hill, when, for the fifth or sixth time, we lost the gig before us behind a bend of the road. We were four minutes, I should say—or, at the outside, five—before we passed the corner, and recovered sight of it; and when we did see it, we both of us this time had need to rub our eyes in earnest. There—a hundred yards a-head of us—stood the gig; and in it sat Mrs. Oldwink in the most unconcerned manner possible; but Mr. Oldwink had disappeared, and with him the mare. Mr. Purkiss pulled up suddenly when this sight met his eyes. He knew no more than myself what to make of it. Oldwink certainly was gone—the mare certainly was gone; but why leave Mrs. Oldwink in that heartless manner to meet her fate alone? And why did that eccentric lady appear so perfectly unmoved at being thus unceremoniously deserted?

Mr. Purkiss whistled softly to himself, while we advanced at a walk towards the deserted lady, who did not condescend even to turn her head when we drew up close behind her and descended to accost her.

Mr. Purkiss was the first to approach her. "A Dummy, by Jove!" he screamed, as he peered under the bonnet. "Done again, as I'm a sinner!"

It was as he said. The figure we had taken for Mrs. Oldwink was merely two cross sticks placed upright in the gig, and covered by the lady's ample shawl and bonnet—in fact, neither more nor less than a respectable scarecrow.

"Well," said I, scratching my head, "I confess I don't see the meaning of this thing."

"You don't!" cried Mr. Purkiss, glancing savagely at me, for he was evidently out of temper at last. "Why, what a stupid you must be! Don't you see, man, that when Oldwink halted close to the plantation, instead of his doing it to breathe the mare as we thought, he did it to give his wife an opportunity of making off into the wood with the jewellery? This thing was then dressed up, and we were enticed forward as far as this spot, in order to give the woman an opportunity of getting clear away. And now, to finish the affair, Oldwink has made off with your mare across the country, and will meet his wife at some place agreed on, twenty or thirty miles away from this. Well, he's a slippery customer and no mistake!"

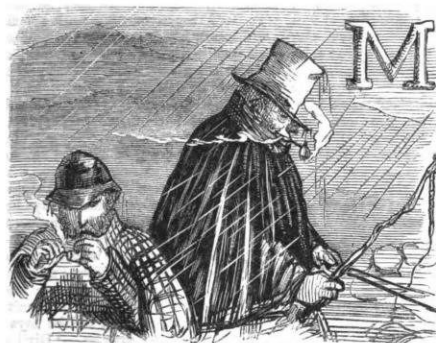
Further pursuit was useless for the present, even if we had known which road Oldwink had taken; and very down in the mouth we both looked as we turned our faces back to Deepwood, which we did not reach till far into night.

What my wife had to say to me about this little affair when I got home, need not be set down here. And the wiggling she gave Jim! Poor old girl! it served her to talk about for many a month after, so that I found it best after a while to shorten her tongue by buying her a peach-coloured satin gown.

I have nothing more to add, except that Mr. Oldwink and his wife were taken at Liverpool some three months after by Mr. Purkiss; for some years after which event they were both cared for at the expense of an enlightened public.

S.

THE VALLEY OF THE INNOCENTS.



iments were worse. The rain poured in torrents—enough, as I heard Darby, the mail-driver, soliloquise outside, “to pelt holes in the hide of a runoscero!” The tempest raged in fury, an inky darkness pervaded, and I had the prospect of an eight hours’ drive before me into the heart of the kingdom of Kerry.

There was nothing else for it; so, with the resolution of despair, I sprang from my turf smoke-perfumed couch, nearly upsetting Thade as he rushed into my room.

“Och! murder, yer honor! I’m ruined intirely. I overslep mysel, and there’s that villin Darby has come too airly, a purpose—”

“Just give Darby my compliments, and ask him would not a drop of hot water, with the insects in it scalded with a drop of whiskey, make him weather-proof this morning?”

“Begar, jest the thing to keep the old baste from growlin his liver out, yer honor!” was the delighted answer of the shock-headed little waiter of the principal house of entertainment for man and beast in the good town of Tralee.

I peeped through the window, and could just discern the outline of the vehicle upon which I was about to undergo an amount of bodily suffering which none but those who have travelled on an Irish mail-car can at all appreciate. Perched upon the apex of a rectangular-shaped box, appeared a bulky mass of shiny wet oilskin garments: naught of the “human form divine” could be seen save a red button of a nose, and about an inch of brickdust-coloured cheek, revealed by the occasional flashings from the bowl of a “dudheen;” with a thing called a hat set well forward to meet the driving rain, and the car drawn close to the door, so that he could reach it with the butt of his whip—there sat Darby Dillon, one of the rarest specimens of an Irish driver it ever fell to my lot to encounter.

After fortifying the inner man, and disposing of Thade and his fee, which he acknowledged with a “God bless yer honor—ids yerself I always found to be a rale ossifer; and sure ye

USHA! bad cess to you, Darby Dillon! Och, wirra! wirra! is id goin to brake the doore in ye are wid hammerin? By the blessed light one id think ye had a goat’s horn on every knuckle! Ha—ha—ha! yer at it agin, ye dirty baste! Ugh! I suppose I must let you in.”

Knock, knock—rattle, rattle.

“Hurry, hurry wid ye, Thade alanna!—hurry, I say. Tell the gintleman in the big beard that I’m off, but’ll wait a start for him if he’s purty lively.”

Post-horn: turroo - turroo - turroo - too! ad lib.

Thus was I awoke out of a most delightful slumber, during which I had pleasantly travelled through all the pleasant paths of dreamland. A rude awakening it was, but its accompaniments never lave us bud I’m wishin ye back agin!” which certainly puzzled me, as I had never set eyes upon him before, and mentally hoped I never might again; I proceeded to mount, and we rattled out of the town, getting an occasional “thug” from a rut or a stone about the size of a thirty-two pound shot, occasioning a shock which sent a throe of agony through the fag-ends of one’s teeth, when Darby opened fire.

“Does yer honor iver take a blast of the pipe?” he inquired, with a patronising bend of his bullet-shaped cranium.

“Often, Darby, mabouchal!” said I; for there is nothing will open an Irishman’s heart like entering into his ways at once.

“Here ye are thin, alanna!” returned he. “Niver be afraid uv id; ids good for the lungs, bewtiful to prinvint ketching a cowl, and whin yer inclined in the way of meditation, bedad ids quare what castles ye can build up out uv the smoke uv a dudheen.”

Accepting Darby’s philosophy, I was speedily occupied in dispersing volumes from the generous weed; during which we overtook a tall, shambling-gaited individual, clothed in black, a cross between a distressed tradesman and an unfrocked parson.

“D’ye see that chap?” inquired Darby.

“Yes; what of him?”

“Well now, if that was a daypoint fellow, I’d give him a lift this blake mornin,—but—Morrow—morrow, kindly!” he exclaimed to the individual in question, “but as I was sayin, yer honor, he’s one uv them snaking Soupers!”

“What the plague is that, Darby?” I inquired, for he might just as well have catechised me in pagan nomenclature.

“Ye see how it is, yer honor, that ther’s some people in this world when ther well off don’t know it, and can’t keep themselves to themselves, and lave ther neighbours to make ther pace wid heaven afther ther own notions; but begor if they find out that you dig wid the left foot, they’ll want to make ye dig wid the right, and so the

world goes round; and they sind craytures like that down here to put contintion among the people; they call it enlight'nin uz. Sure we have light consciences, and light stomachs, glory be to God! an if that's not lightnin enough, I don't know what is!"

I now perceived Darby's drift.

"O, they want to convert you, Darby, do they?"

"Ye have it now, yer honor. Musha, don't let the pipe out!—Well, as I was tellin yer honor, one of thim chaps tuck a purty joke out of me a while ago. He was a sort uv an inspecthur,—a fat jolly chap enough too, an plinty of fun in his way; and bedad ids myself thinks id was more the money he was makin than the marvels he was workin, that tuck up the most of his time!"

"What did he do to you, Darby?" I inquired, fearing his garrulity would lead him to be discursive.

"Why thin I'll tell you. I stopped at Corny Callaghan's up here above, one mornin, to lave him a bag of male; but while I was lightnin the pipe, down comes my gentleman throttin along the Boreen as brisk as a two-year-old.—'Have ye an empty sate on the car?' says he.—'Id wouldn't take a blind man to tell that,' says I, 'seein there's none of thim full.'—'Bedad yer a pleasant fellow, anyhow,' says he, jumpin on the car. 'What's yer name, my man?' says he, as I druv on.—'Darby Dillon, at yer service,' says I, lookin at him hard, yer honor, this way:—'and Darby screwed his little grey ferret-eyes into a look that he meant to pierce like gimlets.—' 'Yer a mumber,' says he, 'of that erroneous religion that sheds ids baleful influence over this benighted land!'—'Bedad,' says I, 'I don't know what that manes, at all at all; but id ids what persuasion I am,' says I, daytermined to let him see I wasn't as ignorant as he was, 'I'm an humble follower of that pagan Prince the Pope of Room,' says I, 'and at yer service!' Well, my jewel, wid that ye think the blackguard id drop off the car wid the laughin. 'Manners is a purty thing,' says I, in a huff, ye understand, yer honor, for a chap doesn't like to be laughed at by thim kind of cattle.—'Pon my honor, Darby,' says he, 'I beg yer pardon!'—'Och, thin,' says I, 'if ids comin boghtrothin down here ye are, ye'd better lave yer honor behind ye!' angered like, ye know, to hear a spalpeen like that takin' the word out uv a gentleman's mouth.—'Well, Darby,' says he, 'and do you attind yer devotions?'—'As often as Her Majesty lets me,' says I; 'but she has such a constant demand for my services, that whin I do get a male of prayers I make a good one!'—'And do you understand what the priest says whin he's prayin for you?' says he.—'No,' says I, 'why should I? Ids not for the likes of uz,' says I, 'to be too pryin!'—'An what good does it do you,' says he, 'if ye don't understand it?'—'It's mighty edifyin,' says I, 'an comfortin too, that fine ould Roman language!'—'Well, bedad, I shut him up completely, an he hadn't another word to say for a long time. By'm bye, anyhow, he got over it, and, as we'd meet a flock of geese, he'd begin to

cackle, 'Gobble, gobble, gobble! Cackle, cackle!' until, upon my conscience, the ould gandhars themselves didn't know whether they wer on ther heads or ther tails. Thin, if we met an ould puckawn goat, he'd begin to 'Ma-a-a-h-a!' till ye'd think he'd crack his jaws. And as to cows and calves and jackasses, bedad he had thim all dancin quodreels along the road. Thinks I to myself, says I, bedad this is a lunnytie, and I got into a fair thrimble uv fright: all uv a sudden he jumps up and ketches me by the arm: 'Darby!' says he, wid a shout.—'Y-y-e-s, sir,' says I, making ready to lep off the car and run for my life.—'D'ye understand what I'm sayin to the geese and the goats?' says he.—'Divil resave the word!' says I.—'Aren't ye edified?' says he.—'I am,' says I, thinkin to humour his madness, ye know.—'Aren't ye comfortable?' says he.—'N—Yes,' says I, ketchin myself before I vexed him.—'Well, whisper,' says he.—'Now I'm in for it, says I; he'll bite the ear off me anyhow: bud sure may he he'd knock my brains out if I don't; so I stooped down to him, yer honor, and he says: 'Sure ye won't tell any one,' says he.—'Divil a word,' says I.—'Pon yer honor?' says he.—'Pon my honor!' says I.—'Well,' says he, 'that's as good to you as the priest's Latin.'"

Enjoying a hearty laugh with the good-humoured Darby, we rolled ourselves up afresh, for the storm came on more pitilessly than ever. We had by this time arrived in a very wild and bleak mountain district, and occasionally we caught glimpses of the Atlantic lashing the iron-bound coast with impotent fury. Wilder and wilder whistled the blast through the narrow defile through which we endeavoured to urge the panting steed; the sheets of driving rain were whirled into mist and fog, enough to obscure the daylight; when suddenly, as we emerged from the rocky pass, there was a lull in the gale, the rain suddenly ceased, the sun shone forth in meridian splendour, and I beheld a scene which has left an impression on my mind never to be effaced: we had entered a narrow valley, surrounded with bleak and barren mountains, adown whose sides leaped foaming torrents; nor verdure, leaf, nor tree gave relief to the eye on three sides of our point of view, but on our right such a romantic little picture enchained the eye, that I jumped from the car and stood for a lengthened period lost in astonished admiration. The road wound in the form of a large horseshoe, on the inside of which ran a clear and beautiful river, unstained by mountain torrent or aught else that was impure; its bed of snow-white pebbles strongly contrasting with the rich emerald-hued verdure of a mound of considerable extent, whose base it washed with a playful ripple, as if to injure such a lovely spot would be a mortal crime against nature. The mountain rose gently from the back of this mound, and there laurestina, arbutus, and evergreens of various kinds luxuriated in wild profusion. Row over row, and tier over tier, this miniature mountain forest arose like the seats of an amphitheatre; the wild rose and sweet-briar gave forth their richest perfume; and the primrose, blue bell, and wood violet flourished in lavish wildness. But the mound, this emerald mound, if ever there

was a peaceful-looking spot on the face of God's creation there it lay: it was studded all over with tiny tombstones and little wooden crosses; so curiously formed, so quaintly fashioned, so cunningly worked, and so carefully preserved—flowers of rare and splendid hue loaded the air with the sweet scents of spring; garlands woven with jealous care hung suspended here and there, whilst gently raised little ridges encased in their moss-clad bosoms all that on earth remained of those whose gentle spirits knew no guile; whose souls knew no sin; who had bloomed and passed away from earth to heaven; whose little voices were hushed by whispering angels; whose sojourn knew not of sorrow or of suffering! Such a holy quiet reigned around, that involuntarily I removed my cap, and as I cast a furtive look at Darby I perceived that poor fellow, rough as he was in exterior, he had a Christian heart, for a tear moistened his cheek as he offered up an Irish peasant's heartfelt prayer for the souls of the dead. To add appropriate interest to the sweet solemnity of the picture, kneeling amongst the tiny tombstones, clad in the picturesque garb of the country, sky-blue coats, and the females with the distinguishing scarlet cloak, were many a poor fond father and mother, who had toiled wearily and from afar to deck with flowers and smooth the mossy canopy that covered all that was dear to them, and to commune in spirit with their lost first-born.

We stood before the "Graves of the Innocents."

As we turned reluctantly to pursue our journey, I inquired from Darby, was there any legend or story connected with this sweet and peaceful resting place? Regarding me with an indescribable look—half serious, half comic—he burst forth:—

"Why, thin, musha, yer honor it's joking me ye are now. Don't you know there's not a mountain, valley, or river, nor a rath, nor a boreen, lake, watherfall, or landmark of our bewtiful green island that hasn't its own wild story? Haven't we White Ladies and Black Ladies, and Phookas, Banshees, and Chirichauns, and Leprichauns as plenty as thorns in a whin bush. Story, indeed—ay, an a bitter one."

"Well, then, Darby," said I, producing a fresh stock of the real "Maryland," which made his eyes sparkle again, "We'll load again, and then you can fire away with the story."

"Long life to yer honor!" ejaculated Darby, as he sent forth a puff like the explosion from a thirteen-inch mortar, and giving the old horse a thwack that resounded along the mountain like the blow of a flail, he settled himself down for a comfortable yarn.

"There's an ould manor in these parts, called the Manor of Friernè, belonging to the raale ould stock, they owned half the counthry at one time, but the ould Friernès were gallows ould chaps for wine and women, and horses, dogs, and hawks, racin and shootin, and spendin their money in foreign parts. Och! musha! 'twas a great ould place in times gone by, and the ould castle stands there still, yer honor, an would do yer heart good to look at it; every stone is as perfect as the day it was built—divil a fut less than thirteen feet of solid stone-work is in every

wall of it—and you might manewver a ridge-mant in the ould court-yard. The last of the Friernès that was in the counthry—oh! he was a wild chap—shocking, and had always a wild clan about him; but there was one desparate scoundrel that used to set him on for all sorts of badness. No good could come of him, and so the neighbours and tintins said; but this black-hearted rascal drew him on from bad to worse until he had to lave the counthry, and thin this chap was made agint over the property. Och! wirra-wirra! bud it was a bad day for the tintins of Friernè;—for they never knew bad thratement until then.

"Ye see that brake up in the mountains, there, yer honor?"

"I do, Darby!"

"That's called Tubbermore!" continued he. "And up there lived a strong young farmer, a tintin of the Friernès, by the name of Con Flaherty. Con had the best farm on the estate, for he was own fosterer to young Friernè, and used to be always at his elbow, until this black-livered hound of an agint put him against him. Con had just been married to the purtiest Colleen Dhas in all Kerry; and many an achin heart there was amongst the boys the day she became Mrs. Flaherty.

"Now the agint, Mithur Dan O'Mara he was called, a Dublin attorney—bad look to the likes of thim—had as liquorish a tooth, and was as bad a boy as ever walked the hall uv the four courts; and many a poor father and mother's curse was upon his head, for many was the poor misfortunate girlreen he left without name or character, deluded and desaiyed; and sure, yer honor," appealed Darby, "a man that id lade an innocent girlreen on to ruin and destruction, and a nameless grave among strangers, to satisfy a few hours of his own bad passions, is no man at all,—he's a brute-baste! Well, this was the sort of chap that had the whole of the manor of Friernè undther him. But the moment he clapped his eyes on Noreen of Tubbermore, he was fairly illuminated about her. Now, Captain, jewel, if there's one woman in the world that's more virtuous than another, ids an Irishwoman; uv course I know there's an odd one now and agin, but in the main they bate creation. So my dear, Noreen up an she told Mithur O'Mara that if he kem to her house agin on the same errand she'd make her husband lave marks upon him that he'd carry to his grave. Well, they lived on, and there wasn't a happier, or purtier, or better hearted couple in the counthry round; the poor never left their doore empty-handed, and the stranger was always welkin. A year rowled on, and their first child was born—oh, such a bewtiful little crayture—'twould jump and clap its dawsy hands, and crow at everybody, showin it had the big, ginerous heart of father and mother; 'twas a little flaxen haired girlreen, too, and 'twas like a wee spring-flower that bloomed before its time. All this time Mithur O'Mara was working his evil plans;—an he par-sacuted the life and soul out of poor Con Flaherty, and things began to go wrong. At last Con forgot himself, and he struk the agint one day at the fair of Cahirciveen; it was all the black thief

wanted, so poor Con was clapped into goal and kept there, and poor Noreen underwent such a persecution that she drooped away to nothing; indeed people said, that to save poor Con from the hulks, she did more nor she ought for Mr. O'Mara; be that as it may, the day poor Con got out of gaol and kem home, Noreen died blessin' him and the dawshy girleen. The next day the bailiff kem and saized everything on the farm for the rent that became due while Con was in prison, and two days after Con Flaherty rowled up his poor little girleen in his frieze cota-more and left the home that had been his and his father's, and grandfather's before him, a desperate and a ruined

man, and, as he left Tubbermore, he swore an awful oath that he would have a deep and bloody revenge on Misthur Dan O'Mara.

"Well, yer honor, the agint heard that Con was goin about threatenin his life, and he went and swore his life was in danger. Oh! yer honor, it would make yer heart bleed if I was to tell you the way they hunted that poor fellow through the counthry; that big black villain always in his thracks, until the neighbours began to cry shame on him; the poor fellow he was like a specthre, and night or day he never left the little, dawshy, darlin Noreen; the dyin prayer of his lost, ruined colleen was always ringin in



his ears; he always kept her wrapt up in his big coat, and no matter where he was hunted, little Noreen was always wid him. The neighbours at last missed him for a day or two, and whin they went to look after him wid some food in some of his hidin places, they found him lyn on that green mound, and there too was the dead body of the little colleen, the jewel of his poor broken heart. They buried the poor darlin there and then, and many is the night the figure of poor Con could be seen sthretched upon her little grave, for his all was there.

"One wild night the agint had to go through the Black Pass, as it was thin called, and his cowardly heart quailed within him, as he remembered havin heard tell how Con Flaherty's child that he had murdered was buried there; bud

he couldn't go back, for the night was wild and stormy. When he got fairly opposite the mound his heart lepped up in his mouth, as he saw a tall, dark, figure glide down from it, cross the river, and stand fair in his way.

"Who-o-s-e there?" says he, every hair on his head stannin of an ind.

"Me!" says a voice, that sounded more like one from the grave than anything else.

"Who are you?" says he, the voice makin him bould.

"Con Flaherty!" was the answer.

"Oh, you black villain!" shouts O'Mara, 'would you murder a difinceless man?'

"My wife was difinceless, and so was my child!" said O'Flaherty. 'And you murdered thim.'

"'No—no—no!' says the villain, his teeth knockin together wid the fright. 'Shure didn't they die natural!'

"'Liar!' shouted O'Flaherty, 'twice to-night,' says he, 'I had you covered, and the waving of a blade of grass would have sent your soul to its long and bad account; but I couldn't do it,' says he, the big tears coorsin down his cheeks, as he dashed the gun in the road, 'for the *spirit of my poor dead child* whispered for mercy for you.'

"The next mornin poor Con was found lying on the little girleen's grave, but whin they wint to wake him up, his spirit had gone to hers.

"Ever since that, yer honor," continued Darby, "the first-borns that die in their infancy, are brought there to be buried from miles upon miles all round the counthry, and on the anniversary of their deaths, if the father or mother are able to thravel at all, they come to the grave to pray, and dress it with fresh flowers and garlands; and they think that the spirit of their child is watchin and smilin on thim; and would you believe it, yer honor, whin I tell you that many a black and foul deed has been prevented by a pilgrimage to the VALLEY OF THE INNOCENTS!" W. C.